



# NEWS RELEASE

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## ***Energy Grant Program Conference To Be Held In Hesston***

### ***Renewable Energy And Energy Efficiency Project Funding Available***

**Topeka, KS –** USDA Rural Development State Director Chuck Banks today announced that the Agency will be presenting a statewide conference covering USDA's *Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvement Program* in Hesston on March 30<sup>th</sup>. The Agency conference, to be co-hosted with the Harvey County Economic Development Council, is being held as a result of USDA Secretary Mike Johann's announcement on February 22<sup>nd</sup> of funding availability for energy projects eligible under the Program.

The *Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvement Program* offers \$11.385 million in competitive grants and approximately \$176.5 million in guaranteed loans, to support investments in renewable energy systems and energy efficiency improvements undertaken by eligible agricultural producers and rural businesses owners.

In announcing the March 30<sup>th</sup> USDA Energy Conference, State Director Banks commented, "The *Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvement Program* provides Kansas farmers and ranchers, along with rural businesses owners, the opportunity to receive funding assistance to harness the untapped renewable energy resources and achieve greater energy efficiency. Establishing renewable energy opportunities and enhancing energy efficiency can also provide additional economic development opportunities for Kansas."

The USDA Energy Conference details, including the location and time of the session, follows:

**Hesston / March 30, 2006:** 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m., Crosswind Conference Center, 8036 N. Hoover Road; Hesston, KS. Registration will begin at 12:30 p.m.

Speaking of the importance of the *Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvement Program*, State Director Banks added, "Enhancing our Nation's energy independence is a key goal of the Bush Administration. Expanding renewable energy systems offers an exciting economic opportunity for Kansas agriculture and our State's rural areas. Implementing the innovative energy policy proposed by the the President can provide an excellent opportunity to strengthen both our national security and the Sunflower State's economy."

The Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency loan and grant program was established under Section 9006 of the 2002 Farm Bill to encourage agricultural producers and small rural businesses to create renewable and energy efficient systems. The Program's funding can support a wide range of technologies encompassing biomass (including anaerobic digesters), geothermal, hydrogen, solar, and wind energy, as well as energy efficiency improvements. A total of 435 grants totaling \$66.7 million have been awarded in 36 states, including Kansas, since the Program began. Beginning in 2005, renewable energy loan guarantees were made under the Program.

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Under this USDA energy program, the maximum amount of a loan guarantee made to a borrower is \$10 million. For renewable energy systems, the minimum grant request is \$2,500 and the maximum is \$500,000. For energy efficiency improvements, the minimum grant request is \$1,500 and the maximum is \$250,000. Grant funds under the Program will not exceed 25 percent of the eligible project's cost, a combination of grants and guaranteed loans will not exceed 50 percent of the cost of the project.

Applications must be submitted to the USDA Rural Development state office in Topeka, with a postmark no later than May 12, 2006. Detailed program requirements and application information was included in the February 13, 2006 publication of the Federal Register; this information can be accessed through the Agency's website at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks> . Guaranteed loans will be awarded on a continuous basis.

USDA Rural Development recently held four regional workshops across Kansas earlier this month prior to Secretary Johann's funding announcement to provide interested parties pre-application information about the USDA *Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvement Program*. Final details of this Program will be discussed at the March 30<sup>th</sup> conference.

Individuals who have an interest in this program or about the March 30<sup>th</sup> conference may contact the USDA Rural Development state office in Topeka at 785-271-2744, or may log onto the state's Agency website at: [www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks)

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs that support increasing economic opportunity and improving the quality of life of the State's rural residents. The Agency provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure in rural America. During Fiscal Year 2005, USDA Rural Development provided nearly \$235 million in direct funding for community and economic development projects across rural Kansas.

***USDA Rural Development – Committed to the future of rural communities.***

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